

One Hundred Fifth Legislature - First Session - 2017

Introducer's Statement of Intent

LB490

Chairperson: Senator Mike Groene

Committee: Education

Date of Hearing: February 27, 2017

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby:

LB490 would create the College Choice Grant Program, which is intended to provide additional financial aid to students who attend Nebraska independent non-profit colleges and universities.

Nebraska is not serving the students enrolled in the state's independent colleges and universities well. With the elimination of three financial aid programs and the passage of what is now the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program in 2003 funds for those students diminished from almost \$4 million in the 2001-02 fiscal year to around \$3.1 million. Other sectors, most notably the University of Nebraska and the for-profit colleges, have seen their allocations increase considerably. Currently 41 percent of the baccalaureate and advanced degrees in Nebraska, including many in-demand career fields like teaching and medicine are earned from independent colleges and universities. Independent colleges and universities also award 200 more scholarships to minority students than public and state schools combined. However, those independent college students only receive about 0.3 of one percent of the funds allocated for colleges and universities in Nebraska.

LB 490 would create a program for the state to use to increase financial aid to students at independent colleges. These schools help provide diverse choices and enriching educational environments for students around the state. It is critically important to the state's interest that independent colleges and universities continue to educate many of our state's best and brightest students and that those students who have financial need to be able to obtain the resources they need to attend the college that fits their needs in Nebraska instead of other states.

Principal Introducer: _____

Senator Lynne Walz